

A DECLARATION OF Some Certain Members of the Layity OF THE CHURCH of ENGLAND.



WE who desire to be real Christian Members of the Church of God in *England*, tho we highly esteem of the Discipline, and Worship of the Church of *England*, and are greatly in love with Bishops, and Common Prayer, and Holy-days, and Fine Churches, and Organs, and Singing-men, and have been out of Charity with all People that would not come to our Churches, and be as we are, yet seeing it hath pleased God to give us the grace of Patience, and to search into the Doctrines and ways of our Dissenters, to know their reasons why they would not joyn in unity with us, and have found, that at this time there are but three Protestant fraternities that dissent from us and their dissenting is but in a few Particular (small matters, which the word of God neither Commands nor Forbids; so that some People that love them may use them, and they that love them not may let them alone: (For Conscience is the stomach of the Soul to digest Doctrine, as the stomach of the Body is to digest meats, and as every stomach is not for all meats, so every Conscience is not for all Doctrines) But the Grounds and Fundamentals of their Religion is the same as ours, that is to say, the true Christian Religion according to the Holy Scriptures, and to show, that there are but three dissenting fraternities, as aforesaid, we have found out these truths following.

1. We find now, that the Presbyterians (because they cannot enjoy tythes) are fain to be content with the Contributions of their Church Members, and so they and the Independants are become but one fraternity, whereas in times past they have been two fraternities; the one for Tythes, and the other against Tythes.
2. We find the Anabaptists, to be the same also in their Divine Service, as the Presbyterian, Independants are, but only in this difference, the one Baptize their Infants; and the other Baptize none, but such People as are at years of Discretion, and Profess Christianity.
3. We find, that divers and several of those People called Quakers, are also very good Christians, and Preach true Doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures, and are something purer than the other Sects, for they seeing Tythes to be a cause, that makes many Profane men get into the Office of the Ministry; and likewise seeing Contributions to be a cause, that makes many Hypocrites also get into the Office of the Ministry: They therefore Preach on free cost to the end, neither the Profane men of the one side, nor Hypocrites of the other side, may for lucre only of Worldly benefit get into the Office of their Ministry, and this is done only for Christs sake and the Gospels, to keep the Ministry pure: For their true Ministers of God did always (in all ages) Preach Repentance unto Sinners, more for Heavens sake than for any Worldly profit; Yet Gods Prophets never wanted relief from Godly People in any age. But *Cromwel* by his Army Persecuted these poor People, because they spoke against the pride and covetousness of his Clergy, that he set up in his time, and God knows many of the Clergy have as much need of rebuke, as many of the Laity many times. Moreover we do not find, that ever any Popish Article against Protestants, or any other false Doctrine hath been preached among the Quakers, as vulgar people have falsely reported.

Therefore we declare.

That it is our Opinion, that such a Voluntary Ministry to Preach on free-cost, as aforesaid, is of excellent use, and exceeding necessary to be allowed of in the Church of *England*, (not only for Preaching to poor People, (in poor Tabernacles,) who cannot pay any thing sufficiently to maintain a Ministry, nor get Pewes in their Parish Churches) but also it makes the Learned Clergy to be the more sober and studious in their places, and therefore we can think no other but that such a free Voluntary Ministry are sent of God, for we remember the Apostles were Working-men of several Trades (as these are) yet we do not believe, that God sent these to hinder the Clergy of maintenance, but only to season them, that they and the World may know, that the Holy Ghost is always among men in the Congregations of the Righteous, continually Working People to repentance by his Babes and Sucklings, and not only by the Learned nor Wise nor Rich, for Christ did say to his Ministers, ye are the Salt of the Earth, that is meant, to season People with Virtue, by good Example of life as well as Doctrine, as Salt seasons meat with salting it: Yet because Satans malice is also always in the World, it is our opinion, that part of every Ministry both Voluntary and Mercenary will be corrupted, but our Saviour hath promised, that we shall know them by their Fruits.

And in regard we now enjoy our own Common Prayer Religion in Peace, we are willing, that all the honest tender hearted Christians among the other three aforesaid fraternities, may enjoy the same liberty; for we judge it to be a Sin to take up Arms to force Religion, knowing, that God only (and not man) is the Defender of the only true Religion that came from Heaven, that is, for men to live diligently after Gods Commandments, and according to the Doctrines Precepts, and Examples of our Saviour Christ and his Holy Apostles, expressed in the new Testament: And we really desire to have the same things used in our Divine Service, which the Holy Apostles both Commanded and Practised: And we think it is necessary there should be an Uniformity of such a true Divine Service, as is most pleasing unto God, which is found in Holy Scripture to consist of two Principal things, namely, 1. The reading and expounding of the Precepts of Christ, and 2ly. The liberty of speaking by the Holy Spirit in decency and order always after Sermon, for if any Persons have in their minds, any new song of Praise, or a Psalm, or a Revelation, or a Prayer, or a Doctrine, or a Reproof to speak (in Gods behalf) unto the People, we see no reason but they should be permitted to speak.

And we should be glad if all Pluralities might be abolished, and Tabernacles permitted to be Built in the Suburbs of *London*, where abundance of Churches are wanting, and that there may be no wandring to any Brothel or tippling Houses on the Lords Day, and that all native Protestants of *England*, may have the same liberty to meet and Worship God according to their Conscience, as the Forreign Protestants of *England* have, and that all People may be put into Church Memberships: And that all Ministers of every Congregation may take Cognizance of every one of their Members, how they spend the Lords Day, and that all Congregations may always pray for the King, and keep themselves from Idols. And in regard there is but three sorts of Divine Service among Protestants, namely, 1. Common Prayer, 2. Sermon, and 3. speaking *ex tempore* by the Holy Spirit, we should be content to see these three things used in every Parish Church, or else to have a Tabernacle in every Parish (besides the Church) for the Lay-Prophets to speak in, especially in great Parishes where People have no room in the Church, for in such great Parishes there is need to be at least two Congregations, that is to say, the Parish Church for the Orthodox Minister and the Rich, and a Tabernacle for the Lay-Prophets and the Poor, and then it will be very like there will not be too many Lay-Preachers, but rather too few, for when they have liberty we believe there will not be one in Ten Thousand, that will then undertake to Preach on free-cost, and all these things aforesaid, we do really believe to be the very Truth; and this we speak in Charity to all: Desiring there may never be any more Persecutions among Christians. *Amen.*